

Gerard ter Borch

A Resource for Educators



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(no. 1)

About This Resource

The aim of this resource is to facilitate the process of looking at and understanding Ter Borch's paintings and to help teachers educate students about how to approach works of art using critical-thinking skills. Educators may utilize these materials either in conjunction with a visit to the museum or independently. Discussion questions are the first step in engaging students in viewing and analyzing art. Students should be encouraged to

- make connections among various works of art;
- establish links with topics and concepts they are studying in school;
- and give expression to their ideas about the works of art in this resource and about art in general.

The discussion questions may be adapted for use with elementary, middle, high school, and college students along with the activities, which are labeled according to whether they are at a beginning, intermediate, or advanced level. Biographical information about Ter Borch can be found in the timeline (p. 41).

This resource was prepared by Nelly Silagy Benedek, Director of Education, AFA, with the assistance of Suzanne Elder Burke, Assistant Educator, AFA, and Education Interns Samuel Lederer, Erin McNally, and Patricia Tuori. Michaelyn Mitchell, Director of Publications and Design, AFA, edited the text and supervised production of the resource. The Exhibition Overview is based on a text written by Kathryn Haw, Curator of Exhibitions, AFA; and the texts on selected works of art are drawn from the exhibition catalogue *Gerard ter Borch* by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. et al. (New York, Washington, D.C., and New Haven: American Federation of Arts and National Gallery of Art in association with Yale University Press, 2004).

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The Dutch master Gerard ter Borch (Zwolle 1617–Deventer 1681) was born into a wealthy family of artists, among whom he would become the most accomplished and successful. He showed an early aptitude for drawing and studied with both his father, a draftsman, and Pieter Molijn, with whom he collaborated on a few landscapes in the 1640s. Ter Borch is best known today for his paintings of elegant encounters between members of upper-class Dutch society. Although these interior scenes occupy an important place in the artist's body of work, Ter Borch also covered a broader range of subject matter including portraiture, landscape, history painting, and genre subjects. This exhibition of approximately fifty paintings brings together a selection of the finest works from each area of the artist's career, highlighting the precocious early pictures of the 1630s, the mid-career genre paintings for which the artist is most admired today, and the small portraits that brought him greatest acclaim during his lifetime.

Map of the Netherlands

Adapted from the map by Johannes Janssonius, 1658. Courtesy of the Universiteitsbibliotheek Amsterdam, Map Department, Collection Royal Dutch Geographic Society



Self-Portrait

c. 1668, oil on canvas, 24¹/₁₆ × 17³/₁₆ inches
Royal Cabinet of Paintings Mauritshuis,
The Hague

Ter Borch's oeuvre, or body of work, contains three self-portraits. At the beginning of his career, he inserted himself into the crowd of witnesses at the left in *The Swearing of the Oath of Ratification of the Treaty of Münster, 15 May 1648*. Late in life, he painted a small self-portrait on copper, consistent with his long interest in portrait miniatures. At the height of his career, in around 1668, he created this impressive self-portrait, one of the few standing self-portraits made by a seventeenth-century Dutch artist. Indeed, this image carries no overt reference to Ter Borch's vocation. It suggests instead his strong identification with the Deventer elite, for the work corresponds closely with the portraits he executed for his patrician clientele in the 1650s and 1660s. In addition to its full-length format and small size, it shares with them formality, reticence, and compositional format: a single figure posing in a spare setting under even light.

Text adapted from Alison McNeil Kettering's entry in the exhibition catalogue.

Ter Borch is perhaps most appreciated for his ability to render the varied textures of luxurious fabrics such as silk, satin, lace, and leather—a skill at which he was unsurpassed. Yet the appeal of his work extends well beyond its painterly grace and refinement. Although Ter Borch's genre paintings follow common themes and compositions of his time—letter writing, discreet encounters between men and women, and family interactions, among other subjects—they also provide extraordinary psychological insight into the drama of the encounters depicted. Tiny gestures, furtive glances, and carefully observed expressions give his figures intriguing and complex emotional character, subtly illustrating the modest pride of

a wealthy Dutch citizen, the tenderness of a mother toward her child, or the pleasures and dangers of love in the moral climate of the seventeenth-century Netherlands.

Ter Borch's portraits, which comprise almost half of his surviving works, are unique among the work of seventeenth-century painters. The full-length format of many of them recalls the life-size portraiture preferred by the wealthy patrons of several of Ter Borch's contemporaries, yet their small scale and the astonishingly unpretentious depiction of the sitters and settings (even in his self-portrait) have no parallel in contemporary painting. Ter Borch's subjects are most often dressed in modest, staid attire and set against a neutral background with very little, if any, furniture. This lack of adornment contrasts with the predominant type of the period—a Van Dyckian model of graceful, elegant bodies draped abundantly in opulent fabrics, often in elaborate interior settings—and presents a seemingly straightforward and humble record of his subjects. With his profound understanding of the slightest details, Ter Borch succeeded in creating the perfect portrait type for wealthy Calvinists. By artfully implying a nobility and confidence, he allowed patrons to subtly assert through posture and expression their social and financial stature without offending Protestant values of moderation and temperance.

Though portraits and genre scenes of upper-class life make up the majority of Ter Borch's works, he also recorded less refined scenes of people engaged in humble pursuits such as tending livestock or grinding stone, as well as important historical moments—most notably his depiction of the pivotal event of the signing of the Treaty of Münster.

Below are themes that educators may use to approach the works of art included in this resource.

DEPICTIONS OF WOMEN/GIRLS

Gallant Conversation (known as *Paternal Admonition*)

The Suitor's Visit

Helena van der Schalcke

A Lady at Her Toilet

GENRE SCENES

The Grinder's Family

The Suitor's Visit

A Boy Caring for His Dog

Gallant Conversation (known as *Paternal Admonition*)

A Lady at Her Toilet

INTERIORS

Gallant Conversation (known as *Paternal Admonition*)

The Suitor's Visit

A Lady at Her Toilet

LETTER WRITING AND LETTER READING

Officer Dictating a Letter While a Trumpeter Waits

MUSIC

The Suitor's Visit

NARRATIVES

Gallant Conversation (known as *Paternal Admonition*)

The Suitor's Visit

The Grinder's Family

PORTRAITS

Posthumous Portrait of Moses ter Borch

*The Swearing of the Oath of Ratification of the Treaty of Münster
15 May 1648* (an historical scene, but also a group portrait)

Helena van der Schalcke

A Boy Caring for His Dog

RELATIONSHIPS

A Boy Caring for His Dog

The Grinder's Family

Beginning/Intermediate/Advanced

Warm-up Activity: Observing the Details

Aims: To observe the details in a painting and understand how meaning is constructed through them; to understand that looking at a work of art takes time and patience and involves careful observation.

Procedure:

1. Show one of the slides in this resource to your students for exactly one minute and then turn off the projector.
2. Have students make a list of all the details they saw in the painting, for example, objects, colors, and textures.
3. What did they notice? What did they miss? Discuss with the projector off.
4. Next, turn the projector on and look closely at the painting. Have your students decipher as much as they can about the work based on their own observations.

Beginning/Intermediate/Advanced

Activity: Writing from a Character's Point of View

Aim: To use writing as a means of articulating the content of a work of art.

Procedure:

1. Show one of the slides in this resource to your students before discussing the content of the work.
2. Ask students to write a paragraph from the point of view of one of Ter Borch's figures or characters. Have students write in the first person.
3. Ask students to read their narratives aloud.
4. Discuss how their observations or thoughts are supported by the visual information in the work of art.

Beginning/Intermediate/Advanced

Activity: Observing and Drawing Clothing in the Art of Ter Borch

Aim: To explore seventeenth-century Dutch fashions depicted in Ter Borch's paintings.

Procedure:

1. Show students the slides of *Helena van der Schalcke*, *Gallant Conversation*, *A Lady at Her Toilet*, *The Suitor's Visit*, *A Boy Caring for His Dog*, *The Grinder's Family*, and *Officer Dictating a Letter While a Trumpeter Waits*.
2. Ask students to compare the clothing depicted in these paintings. How is it similar? Different? What are the colors and fabrics depicted? What do they tell you about each individual?
3. Ask students to compare clothing worn today with the attire depicted in Ter Borch's paintings. How is it similar? Different?

4. Ask students to imagine they are living at the time depicted in Ter Borch's paintings. What would they want to wear? What colors and fabrics would they choose? Have students draw a picture of themselves in clothes consistent with the fashions depicted in Ter Borch's paintings.
5. Discuss the drawings in class. Ask students to explain their choice of clothing.

Intermediate/Advanced

Activity: Writing about Seventeenth-Century Dutch Life

Aim: To write an account of seventeenth-century Dutch life based on a scene depicted in a Ter Borch painting.

Procedure:

1. Although Ter Borch constructs fictitious scenarios, his work does provide a glimpse into seventeenth-century Dutch life. Choose one of the paintings reproduced in this resource and ask students to write an account describing a day in the life of one of the figures depicted in the work.
2. Have students pay particular attention to describing the environment in which the scene occurs, the clothing worn by the figures, and the details of both.
3. Also ask students to describe the figure's actions and what they signify.

Intermediate/Advanced

Concluding Discussion: Looking at Art in Ter Borch's Time

Aim: To understand the criteria for judging works of art in Ter Borch's time.

Procedure:

1. After viewing and discussing the works of art in this resource, read the following quote by the seventeenth-century writer Philips Angel on the qualifications of a master painter to your students:

He has sound judgment, a sure and reliable hand for drawing, a rich talent in the natural arrangement of objects, an ingenious invention of pleasing abundance, the proper arrangement of the light and shades, with a good observation of distinctive natural things, a well-versed understanding of perspective, and equal experience in the knowledge of histories accompanied by profound and essential reflections based upon wide reading and study.¹

2. How does this reflect what a seventeenth-century viewer would have admired in Ter Borch's work?
3. What do you admire in the artist's work based on the paintings you have examined?

1. Philips Angel, *Praise of Painting* (1642). Translated by Michael Hoyle in *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 24 (1996): 242.

**Selected Works of Art
from the Exhibition with
Discussion Questions and
Activities**

Discussion Topics

FORMAL PORTRAIT

VULNERABILITY OF THE CHILD

UNDEFINED BACKGROUND SPACE

ATTRIBUTES

ELABORATE COSTUME

Discussion Questions

1. How has Ter Borch depicted this young child? How old do you think she is? Are you surprised at the way she is portrayed? Why or why not?
2. Describe Helena's clothing and accessories (the stiffness of her skirt, the lace-trimmed kerchief and apron, the elaborate gold chain, the pink carnation and bows, the wicker basket, and the leading strings).
3. What does this portrait communicate about Helena? How has the artist conveyed the child's fragility and vulnerability?
4. Discuss the significance of the carnation as an attribute—a symbol of divine love, resurrection, and hope of eternal life.
5. Compare this portrait with *Posthumous Portrait of Moses ter Borch* and *Boy Caring for His Dog*. How are these depictions of children similar and/or different?

1 Helena van der Schalcke

c. 1648, oil on panel, 13³/₈ × 11¹/₄ inches

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

In this deceptively simple and disarmingly direct likeness, Ter Borch created one of the seventeenth century's most memorable images of childhood. By drawing attention to huge dark eyes set in a pale, pinched face and to the small hand plucking ineffectually at her skirt, the artist poignantly conveyed the fragility and vulnerability of his frail young sitter. He heightened this effect by isolating the figure in a shadowy undefined space, devoid of cozy attributes or any means of physical support.

The subject of this portrait, Helena van der Schalcke, was the daughter of Gerard Abrahamsz van der Schalcke, a yarn and cloth merchant in Haarlem, and his second wife, Johanna Bardoel. Helena was baptized in Haarlem on September 25, 1646. She married Nicolaes Eichelberg, a Haarlem merchant, on December 14, 1666. Helena was only twenty-four years old when she died; she was buried in the Grote Kerk in Haarlem on April 14, 1671. The couple had one daughter, Agneta, who inherited the portrait from her mother.

Ter Borch's sympathetic likeness, which shows Helena at about two years of age, was presumably painted in Haarlem. Helena is dressed in a creamy white bodice and skirt combination, with a lace-trimmed kerchief and apron and a close-fitting cap covering her fine, blonde hair. The most prominent feature of her costume is the heavy double-stranded gold chain slung across her chest and fixed to either shoulder with bows of pink ribbon. She holds a carnation and carries a covered wicker basket. Because the carnation is associated with images of the Virgin and child, it is frequently interpreted as a symbol of divine love, resurrection, and the hope of eternal life. Leading strings—the long bands hanging down from the shoulders of Helena's bodice, visible just behind her right elbow—were a standard feature of children's dress in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, enabling adults to support and guide a toddler's first tentative steps.¹

1. Saskia Kuus, "Children's Costume in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Pride and Joy: Children's Portraits in the Netherlands, 1500–1700*, edited by Jan Baptist Bedaux and Rudi Ekkart (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2000), 77.

Text adapted from Marjorie E. Wieseman's entry in the exhibition catalogue.



Discussion Topics

HISTORICAL TRUTHFULNESS OF DETAILS
ALONG WITH WAYS IN WHICH THIS IMAGE
DEPARTS FROM WRITTEN ACCOUNTS

DIFFERING GESTURES OF THE DELEGATES

COMPOSITIONAL STRUCTURE

COMBINATION OF PORTRAITURE AND
HISTORY PAINTING

Discussion Questions

1. What has the artist included in the painting to make this seem like an important occasion?
2. Discuss the arrangement of the figures, their poses and gestures, and the details included in the interior.
3. Look at the painting's compositional structure. Discuss the horizontal (the frieze-like crowd), vertical (the window frame, chair legs, hand gestures, columnar figures at the edges of the semi-circle), and diagonal (the flag, the row of figures at the back left) elements in the composition. How do they contribute to the overall composition?
4. How has the artist used color to balance his composition?
5. What is the focal point of the work? How does the artist direct the viewer to the central activity? Where are the figures looking? Are they all looking and/or facing in the same direction?
6. Which figures capture your attention or stand out in some way? What has the artist done to distinguish them from the others?
7. The artist has included a self-portrait in the painting. Find the figure of Ter Borch. How is it similar to or different from the others?

continued

2 The Swearing of the Oath of Ratification of the Treaty of Münster, 15 May 1648

1648, oil on copper, 17⁷/₈ × 23¹/₁₆ inches

The National Gallery, London

The ratification of the Treaty of Münster took place on May 15, 1648. This small work is the only painted depiction of that event, which brought a formal conclusion to the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) between Spain and the Dutch Republic.

Ter Borch portrayed about seventy-seven participants and witnesses to the ceremony, all crowded into the main chamber of the Münster town hall. Signatories are grouped behind a round table in the center of the composition. Barthold van Gent, the representative from Gelderland, holds in his left hand the paper on which the Dutch delegation's oath has been inscribed; his right hand is raised. Directly next to him in the front rank, the Count of Peñaranda holds the oath of the Spanish delegation. His right hand rests on a book, as does the hand of Antoine Brun (in silver gray), representative of the Spanish Netherlands. Using a traditional artistic device to proclaim himself an eyewitness to the event, Ter Borch inserted a self-portrait at the far left, next to a soldier wearing the yellow, red, and white colors of Münster (see detail on p. 16).

Written accounts of the occasion reveal Ter Borch's conscientious effort to anchor his image in actuality. In minute detail he described the documents and boxes on the green velvet tablecloth, the Renaissance woodwork of the hall, the star-studded canopy at the rear, and the sixteenth-century candelabrum above. The candelabrum (still extant) bears the Münster coat of arms along with a prominent image of the Madonna in an aureole. Such localizing detail tied the image to one particular place and time, guaranteeing the historic truthfulness of the painting. In addition, Ter Borch was careful to specify the differing gestures of the delegates. Six Netherlanders hold up their right hands with a pair of fingers raised, while two Spanish representatives stretch their right hands out to a cross and Gospel.¹ Nevertheless, the image departs from written accounts in a number of ways. For example, Ter Borch shows all of the participants posed in a tight semicircle. The principals face outward rather than looking at one another. They also appear to be swearing simultaneously rather than one after another as was protocol. Such choices subvert literalism but serve an artistic purpose, adding clarity to the group portrait and cohesion to the composition.



8. Ter Borch made an effort to ground his image in reality by recording specific objects and details that his contemporaries would immediately recognize and associate with this particular event. Identify some of these details, including architectural details, the documents in the foreground, and the differing gestures of the delegates.

9. Point out how Ter Borch's image departs from written accounts: all the participants are posing in a semicircle, they face outward rather than looking at one another, and they appear to be swearing simultaneously rather than in succession. Speculate with your students on why the artist would have changed these details. How has Ter Borch emphasized the importance of this occasion?

More important are the formal means by which Ter Borch conveyed the oath's larger historical significance. In contrast to the approach of contemporary broadsides representing the event, he refused to let Dutch independence become his central focus and allowed no single political allegiance or religious position to hold sway. He balanced the horizontal, frieze-like crowd with a strong vertical movement at the center of the image, culminating in the glowing candelabrum. Its sculpted Madonna (rendered larger than actuality) shines her rays on Dutch and Spanish, Protestant and Catholic, alike. The two sides are so little differentiated from each other that their separate ways of oath-taking—much commented upon at the time—are here given a measure of equivalence. Individual participants are not singled out but rather bonded together in idealized solidarity, suggesting a common concern for the success of the treaty. The painting's point of view is resolutely international and universal rather than local and partisan.



Detail of no. 2.
Ter Borch is the figure on the far lower left with his head in three-quarter profile.

The iconography and composition of *The Treaty of Münster* were without precedent in the medium of oil painting. Painters had traditionally framed contemporary political subjects in allegorical terms. Printmakers, by contrast, often sought to depict recent events with a degree of historical accuracy. Given Ter Borch's "factual" approach to his subject, it is hardly surprising that he used this work as a highly finished preparatory study for a print. Soon after completing the image, he asked the Haarlem engraver Jonas Suyderhoef to reproduce it in a print of exactly the same size, which was ready for sale by 1650. Did Ter Borch also hope to find a buyer for the painting itself? That remains an open question, as no commission has ever

Intermediate/Advanced

Activity: Creating an Historical Scene

Aim: To understand how an artist's depiction of an historical event might combine information gathered from written accounts with fictive elements.

Procedure:

1. Ter Borch based *The Treaty of Münster* on first-hand written accounts of the event. Choose an important event with which you are familiar—it may be an historical event you have studied or a contemporary one you have read or heard about in the news. (Teachers may relate this activity to an historical event being studied in class or to current events.)
2. Find an account of the event written or described by someone who witnessed it.
3. Choose a scene from the narrative account that you feel is the most important or powerful aspect of the event.
4. Draw a picture of that scene. Think about including details that will make the drawing appear to be an authentic account along with elements drawn from your imagination that will contribute to the strength of the image.
5. Discuss the drawings in class. If several students depicted the same event, discuss how the drawings are similar or different. What has each student chosen to emphasize in their account?

been found and nothing connects the work to any single delegate. Indeed, if Ter Borch's biographer, Arnold Houbraken, is to be believed, the artist set an impossibly high asking price for the work which surely placed a huge hurdle in the way of a sale. Perhaps the artist wished to keep this image for himself, as a personal memento of a momentous occasion. Whatever the reason, the painting remained in Deventer during his lifetime, accessible to few viewers beyond the Ter Borch family.

The larger public came to know this image as a print designed for wide-spread distribution. Only in the late eighteenth century did the painting finally leave Deventer. In mid-nineteenth-century Paris, it changed hands several times at prices unthinkable a century and a half before. By then, market conditions for factually oriented paintings of contemporary events—which came to be known as *genre historique* works—had improved considerably. Acquired in 1871 by the National Gallery, London, the painting continued to be understood by many scholars (somewhat anachronistically) as an example of the *genre historique*. But the image might better be viewed as a singular innovation at the time of its creation. A successful amalgam of portraiture and history painting, this work combines realist pictorial techniques with echoes of solemn ancient ceremonies. It was apparent in the celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the Treaty of Münster that Ter Borch's painting has now acquired the status of a historical document, equal in authority to a written account, despite the artist's fabrication of many details. But it has always been more than that.

1. Although Ter Borch included only six plenipotentiaries, the Dutch delegation actually comprised eight representatives, all of whom eventually ratified the treaty. Nederhorst of Utrecht was too sick to attend the ratification ceremony, and the delegate from Zeeland stayed away because of his province's objections to the treaty. A few weeks later, Zeeland agreed to publish the peace. See Alison McNeil Kettering, *Gerard Ter Borch & The Treaty of Münster* (The Hague: Mauritshuis; Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1998) for more information about the painting.

Text adapted from Alison McNeil Kettering's entry in the exhibition catalogue.

Discussion Topics

DEPICTION OF TASKS

ARCHITECTURE

DIFFERENT KINDS OF LOOKING

COMPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS
(FOREGROUND, MIDDLE GROUND, AND
BACKGROUND; AND USE OF DIAGONAL
AND VERTICAL LINES)

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the scene depicted by Ter Borch. What are the people doing? Where is the scene taking place?
2. How would you describe the environment? What do you see in the background? Which details provide information about the environment?
3. Describe the architecture. What sorts of materials and textures has the artist depicted?
4. What is in the foreground? Middle ground? Background?
5. In this work, Ter Borch focuses on various kinds of looking: the mother examines her child's head, the client or apprentice watches the grinder, the grinder looks down at his equipment, and the cat peers out at the viewer. How do these different sorts of looking affect the atmosphere of the scene? What sorts of compositional relationships are created by the placement of these figures and the direction of their respective gazes? How does the artist direct the viewer's gaze?
6. In Ter Borch's day, depictions of historical events were thought to be lofty subjects for paintings, whereas genre scenes were considered less worthy. Discuss the following quote with your students. How does it inform the way we view Ter Borch's work?

"It can't be denied that this subject [genre scenes], tho' is no history, is of an historical nature, and requires as much pains as the handling of some fictions out of Homer or Virgil."¹

1. Gerard de Lairese, *The Art of Painting in All Its Branches* (London 1738) quoted in Claus Kemmer, "In Search of Classical Form: Gerard de Lairese's *Groot schilderboek* and Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting" in *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 26 (1998): 103.

3 The Grinder's Family

c. 1653, oil on canvas, 28^{15/16} × 23^{15/16} inches.

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie

In this most unusual painting of a craftsman's quarters, a man sharpens a scythe on a large grindstone. His body stretches out along a cloth-covered plank; his tense, muscular arms hold the blade against the turning stone. A younger man in an apron leans against a post to watch. More scythe blades and a hammer rest on the bare ground to the left of the grindstone. A broken chair, overturned pots, and other debris lie scattered about. In the foreground, a woman sitting on a low chair delouses the hair of a child, while a wide-eyed cat crouches on a stone block beside them. Rundown buildings surround the figures: a shabby wooden shed behind the grinder, a rough brick hut behind the woman and child. The panes in the leaded window above the woman's head are broken. Yet in the distance we see a well-maintained residence, its front gable decorated with pinnacles and turrets and its roof constructed of slate, a material used primarily for houses of the prosperous in the eastern Dutch Republic.

In subject matter, this image is quite different from the high-life interiors and military scenes for which Ter Borch was known. Its narrative ambiguities raise countless questions: What significance should be attached to the contrast in activities according to gender? Why is a poor tradesman's dwelling set against a regent house?

In the print media, grinding figures appear quite prominently in representations of the trades; in painting, such depictions are less frequent. Most images depict itinerants—no more elevated than peddlers—who sharpen knives and scissors on the street by using portable, treadle-powered grindstones. Books of trades, wishing to ennoble the occupations they feature, give the grinder his own shop. But none of these images, whatever their medium, illustrates a grindstone as huge as the one depicted here, nor one that is animal-powered. In Ter Borch's painting, the gear wheel that drives the grinding stone and the mule that powers the wheel are both visible in the depths of the shed. These details, and the architecture of the whole yard, are specific enough to suggest that Ter Borch possibly observed an actual workplace.

The picture is highly constructed and its details carefully selected. Some viewers have looked to emblematic literature as an aid to interpretation, citing passages in the writings of Jacob Cats and Adriaen van de Venne that identify the paradoxical qualities of the grindstone (dull in itself yet



Beginning/Intermediate

Activity: The Art of Looking

Aim: To observe the various forms of looking depicted in the painting and to understand how these create different levels of meaning in the work.

Procedure:

1. Many of Ter Borch's paintings depict several figures engaged in various forms of looking. After discussing the different forms of looking depicted in this and other works by Ter Borch included in this resource, ask students to choose one figure in *The Grinder's Family* and write a paragraph describing what they imagine the figure might be thinking. Have students write in the first person.
2. Ask students to read their texts to the rest of the class. Compare different texts about the same figure. Directing the students' attention to the painting, discuss how these observations or comments are reflected in the artist's work.
3. Discuss the narrative ambiguities in the work and how these leave the image open for interpretation.

capable of whetting the edge of a blade). Others have sought meanings in the stork's nest on the peak of the house in the distance (perhaps symbolic of prosperity and protection), in the dilapidated architecture and debris (signifying the transitory), and in the overall contrast between rich and poor (implying a moral lesson).

Ter Borch refrains from including anything sentimental, anecdotal, or idealizing, preferring instead to record work straightforwardly and poverty unapologetically. While showing both male physical labor and female nurturance, he allows the woman's work in the foreground to upstage the man's work farther back. Yet he encloses both under the long upward sweep of the dominant roofline, which not only holds the diverse areas of the composition together, but also separates the zone of labor and relative impoverishment from the zone of regent wealth. In order to strengthen the theme of diligence, Ter Borch focuses on various kinds of looking. The grinder directs his gaze intently on the task, the client or apprentice watches him practice that craft, the mother inspects her child's hair, and the cat stares unwaveringly out at the viewer.

Text adapted from Alison McNeil Kettering's entry in the exhibition catalogue.

Woman Combing a Child's Hair
 c. 1652/53, oil on panel, 13³/₁₆ × 11⁷/₁₆ inches
 Royal Cabinet of Paintings Mauritshuis,
 The Hague

Like many common household activities, the act of combing and delousing a child's hair was given a symbolic gloss by seventeenth-century moralists. In *Sinnepoppen* (1614), perhaps the most popular emblem book of the Dutch Golden Age, the moralist and emblemist Roemer Visscher illustrated a comb beneath the caption "Purgat et ornat" (To cleanse and adorn); the perennially popular poet Jacob Cats expounded on hair combing as being not solely an act of caring for one's outside appearance, but also a metaphor for putting one's head in good spiritual order: "Comb, comb, again and again, and not just the hair, But also what lies hidden inside, to the heartfelt bone." The act of combing a child's hair also attested to a mother's diligence in performing her maternal duties. Playing on the word "louse," a contemporary proverb by Johan de Brune invoked delousing as a metaphor for the need to discipline children: "Lazy mother, lousy heads [kids]." Images of combing a child's head for lice had generally positive connotations in the Netherlands.

Text adapted from Marjorie E. Wieseman's entry in the exhibition catalogue.



Discussion Topics

PSYCHOLOGICAL BOND BETWEEN BOY AND DOG

SIMPLE INTERIOR

MONOCHROMATIC COLORS

MORALIZING TONE

SIGNIFICANCE OF PEN, BOOK, AND HAT

Discussion Questions

1. What is the focal point of this scene? How has Ter Borch emphasized the boy's actions?
2. Discuss Ter Borch's palette. How has he drawn the viewer's attention to certain aspects of the scene through his use of color? How has the artist depicted light?
3. How has Ter Borch provided a context for his scene through the inclusion of certain objects and through their placement in the interior?
4. Describe how your eye travels across the painting. What has Ter Borch included in the foreground? How does he lead the viewer inside the scene?
5. How is this image of a boy different from the other images of children included in this resource, e.g., *The Grinder's Family* (no. 3) and *Helena van der Schalcke* (no. 1)? Compare and contrast these depictions.

4 A Boy Caring for His Dog

c. 1655, oil on canvas on panel, 13³/₄ × 10⁵/₈ inches

Alte Pinakothek, Munich

With total concentration and loving concern, the young student in this painting leans over his dog to search for fleas in its fur. The spaniel, whose plaintive gaze is visible from under the boy's arm, lies contentedly in its master's lap. While the subject is not complicated and certainly derives from actual experience, Ter Borch has created an image that is far from anecdotal. Indeed, the psychological bond he has conveyed between man and animal is unique in Dutch art.

Toy spaniels are frequently seen in Dutch genre scenes because, particularly after the mid-seventeenth century, the dogs were considered integral members of many Dutch families. In other paintings by Ter Borch these pets are often found in the presence of rich bourgeois women in elegant interiors. Whether standing attentively at the feet of their mistresses or lying contentedly beside them, however, the spaniels in such works are mere adjuncts to the broader composition and not the focus of concern. The relationship between this boy and dog seems particularly touching in a room that is so barren, with furniture so rudimentary and clothes so simple. Other than the youth's blue leggings, the colors are monochromatic browns and ochers.

Beyond its representation of an everyday event and depiction of a psychological relationship between two friends, the subject has broader moralizing resonances. The boy, for example, cares for his dog in much the same way that the mother cares for her child in Ter Borch's memorable painting *Woman Combing a Child's Hair*, c. 1652/53 (p. 21). Careful grooming and nurturing was a virtue often stressed in Dutch family life. In this instance, Ter Borch's sympathetic portrayal of the boy's concern indicates he intended no negative commentary on the boy's neglect of his studies (implicit in the pen and book that sit idly on the table beside him). But, given the presence of the boy's hat in the immediate foreground, he may well have just returned from school and turned his attention to his dog's needs before commencing his homework. Ter Borch, who often based his images on members of his immediate family, used his half brother Moses as the model for the student.

Text adapted from Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.'s catalogue entry in the exhibition catalogue.



Discussion Topics

ELUSIVE MEANING

SUBJECT MATTER

TEXTURES

INTERIOR

Discussion Questions

1. Focus on the various figures in the work. What is their formal relationship, in other words, how has the artist placed the figures within the composition? What are they doing? Which way are they facing? Where are they looking? Discuss the relationship of the figures to the viewer.
2. Which aspects of the work do you find most compelling? Discuss how Ter Borch engages the viewer through his style, technique, composition, and subject matter.

Intermediate/Advanced

Activity: Constructing a Narrative in a Work of Art

Aim: To construct a narrative in a work of art through the inclusion of objects, figures, and settings that build meaning.

Procedure:

1. Compare and contrast the following works of art: *Gallant Conversation, Officer Dictating a Letter While a Trumpeter Waits* (no. 6), and *A Lady at Her Toilet* (no. 8). Discuss the arrangement of the figures in each work. How are they different? How does the placement of each figure, and the positions relative to one another and to the viewer, affect the tenor of each scene? How does the inclusion of certain objects contribute to the construction of a narrative?
2. After thoroughly discussing the three paintings mentioned above, ask students to plot out their own interior scene with three figures, focusing on the relationship among them. They may sketch a scene in pencil and/or describe it in writing. The scene may take place in a seventeenth-century interior or in a contemporary setting and should focus on the formal and psychological relationships among the figures.

5 Gallant Conversation (*known as Paternal Admonition*)

c. 1654, oil on canvas, 27¹⁵/₁₆ × 28³/₄ inches

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Gallant Conversation—to use the Rijksmuseum’s present title for the painting—is arguably Ter Borch’s best-known image and certainly his most elusive in meaning. Ter Borch painted two versions of it, one now in the Rijksmuseum and the other in Berlin. During the nineteenth century, the painting was thought to represent a domestic scene. Twentieth-century studies later declared it an image of a bordello, pointing to the bed and the mirror, powder puff, and combs associated with female vanity on the table.

More recently, seventeenth-century courtship ritual has also been offered as the painting’s organizing theme: the man is a suitor, the lady in satin the object of his affection, and the woman in black her chaperone. With such a narrative in mind, the bed signifies prospective marriage rather than bought love, and the lady’s upright stance and aloof bearing correspond with the reserved, controlled behavior that courtesy books urged for young, unmarried women. In her poetry album of the early 1650s, Ter Borch’s half sister Gesina included just such contained, standing figures, seen from the back, in her illustrations for a number of poems featuring cold-hearted beauties by the Italian humanist poet Petrarch. It is possible that she and other original viewers would have understood *Gallant Conversation* in light of such Petrarchan conceits. Fully consonant with this interpretation, the lady is shown standing and self-absorbed, while the seated officer addresses, focuses on, and literally looks up to her.

Still, many seventeenth-century viewers would have detected an essential ambiguity in Ter Borch’s image, responding much as we do today to its provocative overlap of hints of virtue and hints of vice. Perhaps “vice” is more apparent in the Amsterdam version, where the greater width of canvas allows space for a scruffy, slinking hound to hang around the officer’s chair, a disquieting departure from the groomed spaniels in Ter Borch’s other interiors. The broader format also directs more attention to the man, whose proximity to the door marks him as an intruder in this feminine world, and whose blunt-toed shoe invades the lady’s space. His military status alone adds an ingredient of titillating risk to the scene. In the narrower Berlin version, one’s attention is drawn more readily to the lady. She becomes not only the officer’s focus but ours as well, concentrating our thoughts on her reserve, her upright posture, and her brilliant attire, and therefore on the positive associations of each. Yet in both versions, mes-

3. Ask your students to provide as much detail as possible about the figures—their expressions, clothing, and gestures—and their surrounding environment. Also, discuss how the narrative may be open-ended and ambiguous in nature—the artist providing clues to its meaning rather than articulating it explicitly.

sages are mixed. We are never quite certain whether the woman demurely sipping her wine is there to prevent or to facilitate a liaison. Should we notice the extravagant feathers in the officer's hat or the loose angularity of his body language? More than most contemporary genre scenes, the painting encourages viewers to ponder a multitude of possibilities and to actively construct their meanings.

Text adapted from Alison McNeil Kettering's entry in the exhibition catalogue.



Discussion Topics

DEPICTION OF TEXTURES

SETTING OF A WELL-TO-DO URBAN HOME

ATTRIBUTES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

INFORMAL POSTURES OF THE FIGURES

AMOROUS CONTENT OF THE IMAGE

Discussion Questions

1. Who are the men in this painting and how are they identified?
2. Describe the nature of their poses. Does it seem as though they are conducting formal business? Why or why not?
3. How do the three figures relate to one another in terms of their stances, actions, and gazes?
4. What are some of the still-life elements included in this scene? (On the table: an inkwell, a leather pen holder, and a clay pipe. On the floor: a broken clay pipe, and a playing card painted out by the artist but still faintly visible.) What do they signify?
5. Discuss the role and significance of the trumpeter in the painting.
6. What do you think will happen next?

Intermediate/Advanced

Activity: Constructing a Dialogue

Aim: To use writing as a means of exploring narrative in the painting.

Procedure:

1. Show students the slide of *Officer Dictating a Letter While a Trumpeter Waits*.
2. Ask them to imagine the conversation taking place between the two men at the table. Have them write up the dialogue. They may include the third figure as well if they wish.

Activity: See activity for *Gallant Conversation* (p. 24).

6 Officer Dictating a Letter While a Trumpeter Waits

c. 1658/59, oil on canvas, 29⁵/₁₆ × 20¹/₁₆ inches

The National Gallery, London

Ter Borch's several depictions of letter-writing officers are largely unprecedented. Certainly, there are images of officers reading or receiving letters or dispatches, but these are transactions conducted wholly within a masculine/military sphere. In contrast, Ter Borch's letter writers are engaged in a passive, thoughtful activity that in visual tradition was almost exclusively the province of women. The domestic settings of these pictures (a well-to-do urban home as opposed to a guardroom) and carefully chosen attributes confirm that these are not military briefs but love letters that are so earnestly being crafted. The officer himself is no rough warrior but a romantic, a gallant; the gaily clad trumpeter commands attention not so much as a harbinger of military action but as cupid's proxy, tolerant and wryly bemused.

Hunched over a cloth-covered table, the young soldier in *Officer Dictating a Letter* pauses in the midst of writing. His careless perch, widely planted feet, forward-leaning posture, and even the helmet he seems to have forgotten to remove, convey a mix of energy and pragmatism. Seated across the table, a second man, wearing a dark hat and a metal breastplate over his garments, appears to be dictating to his younger colleague.¹ Strewn across the surface of the table are an inkwell, a leather pen holder, and a clay pipe. An engaging brown and white spaniel is sprawled in front of the table, bright eyes alertly trained on the viewer. Painted out by the artist but still faintly visible on the floor near the dog's hind legs is a playing card, the ace of hearts, which commonly functioned as a romantic symbol and a broken pipe which may be an indication of an untidy masculine realm.

To the right of the scene, a military trumpeter gazes out at the viewer as he waits to collect the completed missive. He wears a rich blue jerkin, or sleeveless coat, trimmed with bold black and yellow braid, a buff leather jacket, and tall leather boots fitted with spurs. At his left hip, a sword hangs from a broad bandolier; behind his back is his trumpet, suspended from the braided cord slung diagonally across his chest. Characteristic of Ter Borch's attention to detail, the trim at the hem of the trumpeter's jerkin is worn and frayed where his sword has rubbed against it.

The trumpeter's flamboyant costume, a vestige of medieval livery, made him an immediately recognizable character. In the seventeenth century, the military trumpeter served with the cavalry, sounding orders on the



battlefield and acting as a courier; though not an officer, he earned more money and greater respect than the average soldier.² He enjoyed diplomatic immunity and was generally not armed—the swords worn by trumpeters in paintings by Ter Borch and others were more a gentlemanly accessory than a weapon. Like the ensign or standard-bearer in civic militia companies, the trumpeter was a swashbuckling figure, the quintessential soldier-courtier. He shuttled news and messages between military and civilian worlds; he delivered ultimatums and negotiated surrenders with discretion and tact. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the trumpeter became such a pivotal figure in paintings centering on the exchange of amorous messages. The progress of love required no less a strategic battle plan than did wars waged between armies; letters carried by this steadfast messenger helped negotiate the fragile advances and retreats of the heart's campaigns.³



Detail of no. 6

Ter Borch situates his letter writer in a comfortable domestic environment, probably a well-to-do home that has been commandeered for military use. The pavilion bed in the background, with its circular frame suspended from a rafter overhead, may have been a standard domestic furnishing, but it also has obvious visual parallels with military tents erected on the battlefield.⁴ This conceit functions not only as a reminder of the transient nature of the soldier's quarters, but also as a sly allusion to the occupying forces camped out on love's battleground.⁵

The model for the dark-haired officer dictating the letter to his eager young colleague was Ter Borch's pupil, Caspar Netscher (1635/36–1684). Netscher was working in Ter Borch's studio from at least 1655 until about 1658 or early 1659, thus providing an approximate date for the present picture.

1. Whether the young helmeted soldier is writing from dictation, or receiving advice and council from an older, more sophisticated officer on the proper wording of his own letter is not absolutely clear, although the former seems the more likely scenario. See Alison McNeil Kettering, "Gerard ter Borch's Military Men: Masculinity Transformed," in *The Public and Private in Dutch Culture of The Golden Age*, edited by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Adele Seeff (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 2000), 113.

2. A brief survey of the role of the trumpeter in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century is provided in David Kunzle, *From Criminal to Courtier: The Soldier in Netherlandish Art, 1550–1672* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2002), 611–12; also Kettering, "Gerard ter Borch's Military Men: Masculinity Transformed," in *The Public and Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age*, edited by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Adele Seeff (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 2000), 113.

3. For a thorough discussion of love letters in seventeenth-century Dutch painting, see Peter Sutton et al., *Love Letters: Dutch Paintings of Letter Themes in the Age of Vermeer*, exh. cat. (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 2003).

4. Peter Thornton, *Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England France, and Holland* (New Haven and London, 1978), 159. Ter Borch included the tent-like canopy or pavilion bed most frequently (although not exclusively) in scenes of letter writers and readers.

5. Kettering, "Gerard ter Borch's Military Men," 114.

Text adapted from Marjorie E. Wieseman's entry in the exhibition catalogue.

Discussion Topics

OBJECTS IN THE INTERIOR

ACTIONS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
INTERACTIONS OF THE FIGURES

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS

Discussion Questions

This work of art may be examined on a number of levels. Younger students may focus on the themes of music and love whereas older students may be introduced to the sexual themes addressed in the work.

1. How has Ter Borch arranged the figures? What are the relationships he has established among them? How has he established connections between each of them? Discuss the gaze between the man and woman at the door, the look of the man in the background, and the woman holding a theorbo.
2. Observe the textures Ter Borch has depicted. Which are most prominent? How do they affect the way we look at the painting? Where is your eye first drawn and why? Discuss the luminous quality of the central figure's satin dress, her suitor's crisp white sleeves and collar, the vivid colors of the women's outfits, and the warm browns of the musical instruments, tapestry, and chair.
3. Discuss the narrative elements in the composition. What is the significance of the musical instruments? The dog? The woman's central position in the composition? What emotions are depicted or suggested by Ter Borch?

Activity: See activity for *Gallant Conversation* (p. 24).

7 The Suitor's Visit

c. 1658, oil on canvas, 31½ × 29⁹/₁₆ inches

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

The encounter taking place at the doorway of this elegant, high-ceilinged room, decorated with gilded leather wall covering, seems the height of gentility. A debonair young man, hat in hand, bows slightly as he responds to the alluring gaze of the young woman who has come forward to greet him. She apparently has just risen from her green velvet seat where she had been playing a duet with the woman strumming on her theorbo: her music book and bass viol can be seen lying on the table. Behind the women stands a man who, in the dimness of the interior light, warms himself before the hearth as he turns to peer at the visitor.

Ter Borch drew upon his surroundings in Deventer to create a sense of immediacy for his composition. The objects in this work, including the tapestry on the table, the chair, the theorbo, the hearth, and the leather wall-covering, were ones he well knew, as they reappear in different contexts in a number of other paintings from the mid-1650s. The model for the suitor was his student Caspar Netscher, who also features in other of Ter Borch's paintings from the mid-to-late 1650s. Finally, the elegant woman, standing resplendent in her red top and white satin dress, is almost certainly Gesina, Ter Borch's beloved half sister. Not only did she frequently serve as a model for the artist, but her ideas seem to have had a profound effect on the type and character of the subjects Ter Borch chose to depict during this phase of his career.

By the mid-1650s Gesina had embarked on her own artistic and literary career with her poetry album, which is filled with images of love's pleasures and disappointments. Gesina's poetry and pictorial images in this and other albums belong to that important Dutch literary genre, largely influenced by Petrarchan ideals, that both celebrates the delights of love and warns against the dangers of becoming ensnared in ill-advised attachments. In this respect she followed in the path of her father: aside from his topographic drawings, he was also a poet and in the 1620s helped illustrate a songbook with images of lovers cavorting in the grass.

It is against this background of family interest in art, music, and emblematic literature on love and its complexities that the nature of the narrative unfolding in *The Suitor's Visit* is most clearly seen. Under the veneer of gentility is a scene alive with sexual innuendo. The gazes of the couple



The Music Party

c. 1668/70, oil on panel, 22 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 18 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches
Cincinnati Art Museum, Bequest of
Mary M. Emery

In the seventeenth century, music was an integral part of Dutch culture at all levels of society. In sophisticated circles, intimate musical gatherings were not only a pleasurable means of escaping everyday cares, but a popular and accepted vehicle for facilitating social contacts, particularly with members of the opposite sex.¹ Indeed, many seventeenth-century songbooks published for domestic use were exclusively devoted to amorous love songs.² Music was a ubiquitous metaphor for harmony among family members, friends, and lovers alike, and contemporary literary and emblematic references linking music and love are legion. In this painting, a young woman seated in profile holds a theorbo-lute in her lap as she turns the page of her songbook. Across the table, a fashionable gentleman holds an open songbook but seems more interested in attracting the woman's lowered gaze. Standing behind the table, another young man glances down at the music and seems oblivious to the intensity of the exchange taking place before him. His role in the composition is unclear, but his presence lends a titillating covert quality to the duet's amorous subject. As might be expected, Ter Borch's interpretations of the traditional "musical company" theme are deliberately enigmatic.

1. See Edwin Buijsen, "Music in the Age of Vermeer," in *Dutch Society in the Age of Vermeer*, exh. cat., edited by Donald Haks and Marie Christine van der Sman (The Hague: Haags Historisch Museum, 1996), especially 110-13.

2. See H. Rodney Nevitt, *Art and the Culture of Love in Seventeenth-Century Holland* (Cambridge and New York: 2003).

Text adapted from Marjorie E. Wieseman's entry in the exhibition catalogue.

at the door are at once enticing and yearning, a private communication that does not go unnoticed by the gentleman standing before the hearth. More explicitly sexual, however, is the nature of their gestures. The young woman clasps her hands in a manner that could be construed as an invitation for lovemaking, as the thumb of her right hand protrudes between the index finger and second finger of her other hand in a most unconventional, and expressive, manner. His gesture in response appears to be an assent, for as he bows he forms a circle between the thumb and index finger of his left hand.

Ter Borch does not spell out the outcome of the woman's ploy—for her central position in the composition and the dog's inquisitive gaze clearly indicate she is the initiator of the intrigue. Undoubtedly, however, Ter Borch's circle of acquaintances would have recognized that his composition had remarkable parallels with an image found in Jan Hermanszoon Krul's influential book *Eerlycke Tytkorting* (Honorable Pastimes), published in Haarlem in 1634, which contains emblems devoted to the delights and travails of love. The related print accompanies an emblem entitled "De Overdaed en Doet Geen Baet" (roughly, The Excess That Brings No Profit). The thrust of the emblem is a warning that encouragement by a woman is not always to be trusted. Whereas a suitor might feel that love and commitment would follow, all too often the lover is rejected and then belittled. The similarities between the painting and the print seem to imply that the outcome of this match will likewise be disappointment. Finally, not unrelated to the painting's mood are the colors of the woman's dress. In the list of color symbols Gesina compiled in her poetry album in about 1659, white is equated with purity and carnation with revenge or cruelty.

The subtlety of Ter Borch's narrative is matched by the gracefulness of his figures and the delicacy and refinement of his touch. No artist could convey as effectively as he the shimmering surface of a long white satin skirt or the undulating rhythms of a translucent lace cuff. His brushstrokes, while small, are quite loose and rapidly applied with the result that the surface has a richly animated quality.¹ Such an effect is also felt in the subtle psychological interactions he created among his figures. Ter Borch's effectiveness in depicting human emotion and a sense of inner life in such genre scenes may stem from his experiences as a portrait painter.

1. In executing the satin, Ter Borch freely applied thin fluid paint layers that he blended wet into wet in a series of thin scumbles of liquid, soft-edged colors. He then painted details once his layer was dry. He created his flesh tones with a gray underpainting, thinly glazed in the shaded areas and more thickly painted in the light areas.

Text adapted from Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.'s entry in the exhibition catalogue.



Discussion Topics

DEPICTION OF WEALTHY BURGHERS' HOUSEHOLDS INCLUDING THEIR POSSESSIONS AND CLOTHING

PSYCHOLOGICAL INTROSPECTION OF FIGURES

ELEGANT INTERIOR AND OBJECTS

CENTRAL FIGURE'S FACIAL EXPRESSION

PICTORIAL ELEMENTS RELATED TO LOVE

OPEN-ENDED NARRATIVE

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the interior, including the architectural elements, furniture, and still-life elements (marble fireplace, table with ornate rug, mirror, and gilded candle stick). What materials has the artist rendered? Describe the different textures.

2. Ter Borch is well known for constructing open-ended narratives whose precise meanings are elusive. What do you think is happening in this scene? Discuss who is or is not looking at whom and what this may signify. Also discuss the actions and gestures of the figures (the page offering a decorated ewer to the young woman, the young woman absentmindedly playing with her ring, the maid adjusting the satin dress, and the dog jumping up on the chair).

Activity: See activity for *Gallant Conversation* (p. 24).

8 A Lady at Her Toilet

c. 1660, oil on canvas, 30 × 23½ inches

The Detroit Institute of Arts, Society Purchase, Eleanor Clay Ford Fund, General Membership Fund, Endowment Income Fund and Special Activities Fund

No Dutch artist captured better than Gerard ter Borch the elegance and grace of wealthy burghers, nor did any express with such subtlety those moments of psychological introspection and uncertainty that attend even those individuals of such stature. Both of these aspects of Ter Borch's genius are combined in *A Lady at Her Toilet*, one of the artist's most refined, yet provocative masterpieces.

In this painting Ter Borch has depicted an unguarded moment in the life of an elegant young woman. She stands in the midst of a sumptuous domestic interior, complete with an imposing marble fireplace. Behind her is a table covered by an ornate Oriental-style rug, on which are an oval brush box, a gilded candlestick with two snuffed-out candles, and a mirror surrounded by an elaborately carved gold frame.¹ As the woman's maid bends to adjust her white satin dress and a young page expectantly offers her a richly decorated ewer, probably containing perfumed water, the young woman glances absentmindedly to the side and fingers the ring on her left hand. Her expression, while difficult to read, is certainly not one of reverie or joy. It has a tinge of uncertainty, even worry, which is even more apparent in the reflected image of the woman's face that fills the mirror on the table.

Although her elegant, low-cut dress with blue top, white satin skirt, and shimmering golden shawl were probably meant to be worn at a special occasion, it is not certain if the woman is getting dressed or undressed, if she is preparing for the evening or reflecting upon it. For all of the image's sensual beauty, from the young woman's attractive appearance to the young page's resplendent wardrobe, questions about the quiet, understated human drama unfolding in the privacy of this woman's domestic quarters are equally compelling. Although Ter Borch conveyed the woman's emotional fragility with the subtlest of gesture and expression, he left the narrative open-ended, allowing each viewer's imagination to become fully engaged in fulfilling the story.²

Although Ter Borch does not reveal the reasons for the young woman's concerns, her anxieties are those well known to anyone who has felt the pangs of uncertainty in love. The pictorial elements related to love in this work include not only the ring on the woman's finger but also the tent-like



bed in the background. The prominently placed double candlestick would seem to have particular significance in this work. Snuffed-out candles are fraught with emblematic meanings in Dutch art, often suggesting the transience of worldly existence.³ Ter Borch would seem to have included these pictorial elements and the mirror, another object generally associated with transience, to enlarge upon the anxieties affecting the woman's state of mind.⁴ In emblematic literature, burning candles were equated with a true heart and conquering love. In this instance, their being snuffed out would seem to allude to love's passing, engendered, perhaps, by uncertainties caused by a lover's absence. Finally, not unrelated to the mood of the painting are the colors of the woman's dress. In the list of color symbols Gesina ter Borch compiled in her poetry album around 1659, white is equated with purity and blue with jealousy.

As much as Ter Borch's contemporaries admired the artist's exquisite renderings of materials, they must also have enjoyed pondering the human situations he depicted in such works. Unfortunately, documents yield little information about how contemporary viewers responded to the scenarios depicted in Ter Borch's genre scenes. It is not even certain where the artist sold such works, although it would seem probable that his primary market for genre scenes was Amsterdam.

Ter Borch apparently executed *A Lady at Her Toilet* around 1660, shortly after painting *Curiosity* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) and *The Suitor's Visit* (no. 7). These scenes are comparable in their sensual character. Ter Borch also replicated exactly in this work the white satin dress of the standing woman in *The Suitor's Visit*. The delicacy of his brushwork creates the illusion that he painted the satin from life.

1. For a discussion of the type of carpet depicted here, see Onno Ydema, *Carpets and Their Datings in Netherlandish Paintings: 1540–1700* (Zutphen: Walburg Press, 1991), 99–107, 188, 196–197. For a brief discussion of the style of silver toilette items, see Mariet Westermann, *Art & Home: Dutch Interiors in the Age of Rembrandt* (Zwolle, Netherlands: The Denver Art Museum, The Newark Museum, and Waanders Publishers, 2001), 197, cat. no. 86

2. For an excellent discussion of art and literature that approached narrative in this manner, see Philipp Fehl, *Sprezzatura and the Art of Painting Finely: Open-ended Narration in Paintings by Apelles, Raphael, Michelangelo, Titian, Rembrandt and Ter Borch* (Groningen: The Gerson Lectures Foundation, 1997).

3. Although it is possible that Ter Borch depicted the candles as being snuffed out because he wanted to emphasize that the scene occurred during daylight hours, this interpretation seems unlikely. It seems improbable that Ter Borch would have chosen to depict them in this central location had he not wished to draw specific attention to them for their symbolic implications about the nature of the scene being depicted.

4. For a list of the various symbolic interpretations associated with a mirror, see Peter C. Sutton, *Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting*, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1984), 151. None of these, however, seems to be relevant to the mirror's context in this work, in large part because the woman is not looking into it.

Text adapted from Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.'s entry in the exhibition catalogue.

Discussion Topics

FULL-LENGTH FORMAT

COMPOSITION

USE OF LIGHT AND DARK

ICONOGRAPHY

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the figure and his surroundings. How is the figure dressed? What do you think his pose and garments suggest about him?
2. Describe the various textures rendered by the artists. How is each different? Which reflect light?
3. Describe the relationship of the figure to the background. How have the artists arranged the composition to make the figure prominent? Describe the use of color, light and shadow, and the placement of the figure within the composition.
4. For older students: This is a commemorative portrait. How have the artists used iconographic elements to construct this image? What is the significance of each of the still-life elements, and why do you think each is included in the portrait? Discuss military symbols, *vanitas* emblems, and symbols that may indicate values or emotions.

Beginning

Activity: Creating a Portrait

Aim: To draw a portrait of an individual and communicate information about him/her through the subject's character, clothing, posture, and attributes.

Procedure:

1. Look at the portrait of Moses ter Borch with your class. Discuss how the objects in a painting and the figure's clothing and posture can communicate information about the person depicted.
2. Ask students to draw a picture of someone they know. They may choose a family member or a friend. Have them

continued

9 Gerard ter Borch and Gesina ter Borch Posthumous Portrait of Moses ter Borch

c. 1668, oil on canvas, 30½ × 23⅙ inches

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Gerard painted this work with his half sister Gesina (1631–1690). It is their only known collaboration and her only extant work in oil. Documents indicate that Gesina received some training in oil painting, probably from Gerard, but she devoted most of her time to watercolor, the medium she used for illustrating books, including her *kunstboek* (scrapbook). The latter contains a section devoted to the memory of her brother Moses (1645–1667)—Gerard's half brother—who died in battle off the coast of England. Moses had shown great talent as a draftsman in his youth. In about 1664 he volunteered for the Dutch navy and joined the fight against the English in the Second English–Dutch War. In the summer of 1667 he took part in an attack on a fort near Harwich, an operation that proved successful except for the loss of a few men, Moses among them. One of Gesina's watercolors for her scrapbook shows her brother on the beach near Harwich, surrounded by references to his passing. The date inscribed at the lower right indicates Moses's death rather than the year of execution.

The *Posthumous Portrait of Moses ter Borch* steps right off the page of Gesina's scrapbook. Moses is dressed just as he is in the watercolor: long buff coat tied with a silk sash, wide bandolier slung over one shoulder, aristocratic walking stick, lace cravat, and full, flounced, ribbon-decorated sleeves. His stiff posture is softened only slightly by the placement of one slender leg in front of the other. Both in the watercolor and in the oil painting, the figure conforms to standards of dignified, gentlemanly decorum while it still exhibits the virility appropriate to a military man. If such features show Gesina's hand in this collaboration, others can be attributed to Gerard. The format—an upright, cabinet-sized portrayal of a full-length standing figure—was favored by Gerard in these years. Filling the oil painting (but not the watercolor), the figure is strongly lit against a relatively dark ground. Gerard's handling of paint is also immediately apparent in the head of Moses, where the skin, features, and hair show his delicate, subtle touch. Perhaps Gerard also painted the hands, armor, hourglass, and greyhound. Gesina certainly executed the rest: the lace and other details of clothing, the spaniel, the remaining allegorical attributes, and the landscape. Her use of oil paint in these areas bears all the characteristics of her approach in watercolor—dry, thick, and linear.



think of one or two objects that they associate with that person. Then ask them to think of what the person likes to wear and what they like to do. Ask students to depict their subject in a way that gives the viewer some information about them.

Intermediate/Advanced

Activity: Creating a Commemorative Portrait

Aim: To create a commemorative portrait of an individual through drawing and writing.

Procedure:

1. Discuss the idea of a commemorative portrait. Identify the details in *Posthumous Portrait of Moses ter Borch* that contribute to the commemorative nature of the portrait and discuss how each element of the work relates to the others.
2. Write a description of Moses ter Borch based on how he is depicted in this painting.
3. Write a description of someone you know or about whom you have read. Include as many of the qualities about their personality that you think make or made them unique. Consider their interests, hobbies, and any meaningful events that have occurred in their lives.
4. Translate this description into a drawing. Think about ways of giving visual form to the ideas you expressed in your written piece. Use symbols or emblems to articulate your ideas and the observations you have made in your writing.

Gesina likely took responsibility for the iconographical program as well, surrounding the iconic central figure with an array of objects, each laden with obvious, direct symbolism (Gerard, a master of the rhetoric of simplicity, preferred a non-allegorical approach to commemorative portraiture). Here Gesina accumulated attributes as if she were amassing eulogies to her beloved younger brother. Clusters of separate still lifes encircle Moses, combining biographical references with common *vanitas* emblems. Military symbols include a ceremonial helmet, armor, and gun. Shells hint at the naval engagement. Watch, flute, hourglass, skull, bone, butterfly, and snake all connote transience and an untimely death. Cyclamen suggests sorrow; a thistle, constancy; and ivy, eternal life. The two dogs surely represent fidelity (but also signify his social status). Interestingly, these same dogs appear elsewhere in Gesina's work.

Allegory in portraiture, particularly in the medium of oil painting, was most often the prerogative of royalty and aristocracy. In the medium of prints, by contrast, small-scale, emblematic engravings did sometimes celebrate military prowess in just this manner. Such visual images must have informed Gesina's emblematic way of thinking and seeing.

After its execution, the posthumous portrait of Moses stayed in the Ter Borch family alongside other memorabilia. Sometime in the nineteenth century, however, it found its way to a New York private collection, from which it was eventually deeded to the New York Historical Society. Auctioned in 1995, the painting was purchased by the Rijksmuseum and thus rejoined the Ter Borch family estate in the Dutch national collections.

Text adapted from Alison McNeil Kettering's entry in the exhibition catalogue.

- 1568** The Eighty Years' War between Spain and Netherlands begins, leading to the foundation of the Dutch Republic in 1581.
- 1581** United Provinces declare independence from Spanish Hapsburg rule.
- 1588** Spanish Armada is defeated by the Anglo-Dutch fleet.
- 1603** Hendrick de Keyser (1565–1621) is appointed architect to the city of Amsterdam, where he builds churches, official buildings, and secular structures.
- 1604** Karel van Mander's *Schilder-Boeck*, a Dutch manual and history of painting, is published.
- 1606** Rembrandt (1606–1669) is born in Leiden.
- 1608** New Exchange, a stock exchange, founded in Amsterdam.
- 1609** Twelve Years Truce declared between the Dutch Republic and the Spanish Netherlands.

Early 1600s

Still-life painting flourishes in the Low Countries as an independent genre. *Vanitas* compositions are also popular.

Haarlem, a commercial and cultural center, is one of the most important cities in the Low Countries and home to many artists. Flemish settlers bring the artistic traditions of the Southern Netherlands north to Holland.

- 1617** Gerard ter Borch is born in Zwolle, a provincial city without a significant artistic tradition but important as a trading center.
- 1620s** The Utrecht Caravaggisti—a group of painters led by Hendrick ter Brugghen (1588–1629), Dirck van Baburen (c. 1594–1624), and Gerrit van Honthorst (1592–1656)—work in a style inspired by the Italian artist Caravaggio (1571–1610), whose paintings they see in Rome. The Caravaggistis' works reflect the innovations of the master in their use of strong contrasts of light and dark.
- 1621** Ter Borch's mother dies.
End of the Twelve Years' Truce.
Ter Borch's father marries Geesken van Voerst.
- 1625** Ter Borch creates earliest-known drawings at the age of eight. His father, who is providing him his artistic education, dates the drawings.
- 1628** Ter Borch's father marries Wiesken Matthys after the death of his second wife.

- 1631** Ter Borch's half sister Gesina (d. 1690) is born. By this time, Ter Borch has begun a sketchbook of landscape drawings of Zwolle and the surrounding countryside.
- 1632** Johannes Vermeer is born in Delft (1632–1675).
- 1634** Ter Borch studies under Pieter de Molyn (1595–1661) in Haarlem. He switches from pen to black chalk in his drawings as a result of Molyn's influence.
The United Provinces and France ally against Spain.
- 1635** Ter Borch is named a master in Haarlem's St. Luke's Guild.
He later visits England and works for his step-uncle, Robert van Voerst, who is an engraver in England. Ter Borch receives a letter from his father encouraging him to paint in a "modern" style, in which the movement and liveliness of figures is crucial.
Ter Borch studies the portraits of Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641). Later that year he paints *The Consultation*, his earliest signed and dated work.
- 1635–36**
Ter Borch returns to Zwolle.
- Late 1630s–early 1640s**
Ter Borch travels to Spain where he is inspired by the power and composition of Diego Velázquez's (1599–1660) portraits. He paints a portrait of Philip IV, king of Spain.
- 1640** Peter Paul Rubens dies.
- 1642 August 22**
English Civil War begins when Charles I declares war on the Puritan Parliament at Nottingham.
"Praise of Painting," a speech by the Leiden art theorist Philips Angel is published.
Rembrandt paints *The Nightwatch*.
- 1646** Ter Borch, who has probably settled in Amsterdam after returning from Spain, is invited to join delegates of the United Provinces in Münster, Westphalia, to record the signing of the Treaty of Münster.
- 1648 May 15**
Treaty of Münster signed, establishing the United Provinces as an independent territory.
Ter Borch paints the *The Swearing of the Oath of Ratification of the Treaty of Münster, 15 May 1648* (no. 2). During his time in Münster, Ter Borch paints a number of portraits of delegates from both nations involved in the treaty. Later travels to Brussels with the Spanish delegation.

1648 Ter Borch paints *Helena van der Schalcke* (no. 1).

Late 1648

Ter Borch returns to the Netherlands. Develops a new form of genre painting featuring large-scale scenes, close vantage points, and complex psychological interactions.

Late 1649s

Returns to his family in Zwolle and paints many portraits of his siblings and parents. His sister Gesina studies literary concepts of love and compassion that appear in Gerard's domestic paintings of this time period.

1652 Outbreak of first Anglo-Dutch War, which lasts until 1654.

c. 1652/53

Ter Borch paints *Woman Combing a Child's Hair*. (p. 21)

1653 Ter Borch visits Delft, Holland where he cosigns a document with Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675).

Paints *The Grinder's Family* (no. 3).

1654 February 14

Ter Borch marries his stepmother's sister, Geertruyt Matthys, and settles in Deventer.

Paints *Gallant Conversation* (known as *Paternal Admonition*) (no. 5).

c. 1655 Ter Borch paints *A Boy Caring for His Dog* (no. 4).

c. 1658 Ter Borch paints *The Suitor's Visit* (no. 7).

c. 1658/59

Ter Borch paints *Officer Dictating a Letter While a Trumpeter Waits* (no. 6).

c. 1660 Ter Borch paints *A Lady at Her Toilet* (no. 8).

c. 1661 Vermeer paints *View of Delft*.

1662 Ter Borch's father dies.

1665 Outbreak of the Second Anglo-Dutch War, which lasts until 1667.

Ter Borch achieves full citizenship in Deventer Society.

1666 Ter Borch becomes city counselor of Deventer, a representative of one of the town's eight wards. Takes on several students including Caspar Netscher, Pieter van Anraadt, and Roelof Koets.

Frans Hals (c. 1580–1666) dies in Haarlem.

1667 June 21

The Peace of Breda ends the second Anglo-Dutch War.

Ter Borch paints *The Town Council of Deventer* for the town hall.

- c. 1668 Ter Borch and Gesina Ter Borch paint *Posthumous Portrait of Moses ter Borch* (no. 9), and Ter Borch paints *Self-Portrait*. (p. 4)

1669 October 4

Rembrandt dies in Amsterdam.

- 1670 Ter Borch paints *The Music Lesson* and *The Music Party*.

1672 April 29

King Louis XIV of France invades the Netherlands.

- May Ter Borch paints first portrait of William III, Prince of Orange.

1672–74

Third Anglo-Dutch War. The French army is defeated.

Ter Borch lives in exile in Amsterdam after French allied forces invade Deventer.

1674 May

Ter Borch returns to Deventer as one of its leading citizens and paints second portrait of William III, Prince of Orange.

- 1675 Visits The Hague and Haarlem.

Vermeer dies in Delft.

- 1676 Cosimo III de' Medici commissions Ter Borch to paint a self-portrait for his gallery of artists in Florence.

1681 December 8

Ter Borch dies in Deventer.

The information for this timeline was drawn from the following sources:

Westermann, Mariet. *A Worldly Art: The Dutch Republic 1585-1718*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.

Wheelock Jr., Arthur K., et al. *Gerard ter Borch* (New York and Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Arts and National Gallery of Art), 2004.

www.metmuseum.org/toah/ht/09/euwl/ht09euwl.htm

allegory An artistic or literary expression of ideas about the human experience by means of symbolic figures often used to create a story with a moral message.

broadside A large page or leaflet containing text and/or images on one side, intended for wide distribution.

burgher A citizen of a town or borough; often connotes a middle-class or merchant-class citizen.

Calvinism A sect of Christianity founded by John Calvin in 1535. Calvinism was popular in Western Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and was the predominant faith in the Netherlands.

Caravaggisti Term applied to painters who imitated the artist Caravaggio's (1571–1610) style in the early seventeenth century and whose works reflect the Italian master's use of dramatic contrasts of light and shadow.

composition The combination of elements in a painting or other work of art.

Dutch Of or relating to the Netherlands or its people or culture.

Dutch Golden Age A period of widespread wealth, consumerism, patronage, and religious tolerance in the seventeenth-century Netherlands, which coincided with the Netherlands gaining its independence from Spain. During this time, artists began marketing their artwork to the middle class. This shift from earning money through commissions from the church and nobility to creating artwork independently (and then finding a buyer) marked the beginning of the modern art market.

The Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) War between Spain and the Netherlands. The seven northern provinces of the Netherlands declared their independence from Spain and founded the Dutch Republic while the southern provinces of the Netherlands continued to be loyal to Spain. The Treaty of Münster marked the end of the war.

emblem A picture with a motto or a set of verses intended as a moral lesson. Also, an image with a hidden meaning.

emblematic literature Books comprising visual images of objects endowed with symbolic meanings. The images were usually accompanied by explanatory texts. Emblematic literature was widely popular with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Northern European artists who used symbolic objects in their works to convey moralizing messages.

Flemish art The art of Flanders in the Southern Netherlands.

foreground In the pictorial arts, the part of the composition that appears to be closest to the viewer.

frieze A relief or painting used decoratively in a long horizontal format.

genre A type of painting showing scenes from everyday life, particularly popular in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. The term also refers more generally to the various types of subject matter: history, portraiture, landscape, still life, and flower painting.

genre historique French term used to describe paintings that depict recent historical events with reasonable accuracy. Such paintings are generally small in scale.

gilding The application of a thin layer of gold to the surface of an object for decoration.

guild Economic and social organization for those practicing the same business or craft. Formed for mutual aid and protection, a guild would commonly maintain standards, set prices, and protect the interests of its members.

Haarlem A city in Holland referred to as the “Florence of the North.” Haarlem was the home of many painters and craftspeople during the Dutch Golden Age.

Frans Hals (c. 1580–1666) Seventeenth-century Dutch portrait painter known for his exuberant brush work and lively subject matter.

Holland A province in the Netherlands.

iconography A set of images or symbols conventionally associated with a subject; also the imagery used in a work of art, by a painter or artistic school, or in the art devoted to a particular subject.

kunstboek A book with blank pages used for sketching or painting, such as the one used by Gesina, Gerard ter Borch’s half sister, for her water-color paintings.

medium The materials used by an artist, such as oil paint and canvas. Also the mode of expression employed by an artist such as sculpture or painting.

narrative In painting, the progression of an idea or story illustrated through the use of images.

The Netherlands Region of Europe that comprises Holland, Friesland, Zeeland, and other provinces. The borders of this area shifted many times until 1830, due to changes in political control.

oeuvre The total work output of an artist.

patrician A member of the noble or aristocratic class.

patron A person who supports an artist’s work through purchases, commissions, and other funding.

Petrarchan Inspired by or relating to Petrarch, the fourteenth-century Italian poet, scholar, and humanist who is most famous for his lyrics about love.

portrait A picture primarily of a person’s head and shoulders. Ter Borch became well known for his full-body portraits.

Protestant A member of the Protestant Christian sect whose faith and practice are founded on the sixteenth-century Reformation principles of Martin Luther and John Calvin. Protestants follow the Calvinist doctrine of a church founded on close readings of the original biblical text and of salvation through personal faith, rather than through mediation of the clergy and the sacraments. They maintained the sacraments of Baptism and communion but did away with sacraments wholly dependent on the clergy, such as confession.

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669) Seventeenth-century Dutch master known for painting psychologically complex portraits and compelling genre scenes and for employing dramatic lighting.

subject matter The topic or theme used by an artist as the vehicle for artistic expression, for example, landscape, still life, or the human figure.

symbolism A set of communally accepted meanings associated with a form.

theorbo A seventeenth-century lute having two sets of strings and an S-shaped neck with two sets of pegs, one set above and somewhat to the side of the other.

tone The prevailing hue in a painting.

vanitas An allegorical still life, often featuring a skull, mirror, bubbles, or a clock in which the objects depicted serve as reminders of the transience of human life. This type of painting was especially popular in seventeenth-century Holland, particularly with those artists working in the city of Leiden. The word derives from the Latin phrase *vanitas vanitatum*, or “vanity of the vanities” (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675) Seventeenth-century Dutch painter known for his meticulous depiction of light and texture.

Definitions were drawn from the following sources:

Clarke, Michael. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Lucie-Smith, Edward. *The Thames and Hudson Dictionary of Art Terms*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1984.

Mayer, Ralph. *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Art Terms and Techniques*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991.

Westermann, Mariet. *A Worldly Art: The Dutch Republic 1585–1718*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.

Alpers, Svetlana. *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*. London: 1983.

An examination of letter reading and writing in works by Ter Borch and those of other Dutch artists of the seventeenth century.

Bedaux, Jan Baptist. *The Reality of Symbols: Studies in the Iconology of Netherlandish Art, 1400–1800*. The Hague: Gary Schwartz Publishers, 1990.

An extensive study on the changing meanings, depictions, and interpretations of symbolism in Dutch art, 1400–1800.

Franits, Wayne E., ed. *Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Contains Alison McNeil Kettering's essay "Ter Borch's Ladies in Satin," which discusses depictions of social ideals, sexual behavior, and the literature of love in Ter Borch's works.

Franits, Wayne E. *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

An examination of conventions of female life in seventeenth-century Holland in literature and art. The author discusses social interactions and the use of symbolism in the works of Ter Borch.

Grijzenhout, Frans, and Henk van Veen, eds. *The Golden Age of Dutch Painting in Historical Perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Examines the collectors, patrons, and artists of the Dutch Golden Age.

Gudlaugsson, S. J. *Gerard ter Borch: Zwolle 1617–Deventer 1681*. Exh. cat. Mauritshuis, The Hague; Landesmuseum, Münster. The Hague, 1974.

A comprehensive exhibition catalogue on Ter Borch's oeuvre.

Haak, Bob. *The Golden Age: Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1984.

Contains a brief biography of Ter Borch with black and white and color plates of his works, along with a discussion of Ter Borch's students and other Deventer artists whom he influenced.

Haverkamp-Begemann, Egbert. "Terborch's *Lady at Her Toilet*." *Art News* (December 1965): 38–41, 62–63.

Provides a detailed examination of *A Lady at Her Toilet*, including a discussion of the studies leading up to the painting and the work's subsequent influence on other artists.

Kahr, Madlyn Millner. *Dutch Painting in the Seventeenth Century*. Harper & Row: New York, 1978.

An introductory text on seventeenth-century Dutch painting. Contains the essay "Frans Hals and The Portrait," which looks comparatively at Ter Borch's and Hals's portraits. Another essay, "Scenes of Social Life," examines Ter Borch's depiction of letter writing and military scenes.

De Jongh, Eddy. *Faces of The Golden Age: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Portrait*. Exh. cat. The Hague: Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, 1994.

Discusses the technical and historical aspects of Dutch portraiture. It contains a catalogue entry on Ter Borch's group portrait, *Anthonie Charles de Liedekercke, Willemine van Braeckel and Their Son Samuel*.

Kettering, Alison McNeil. *Gerard Ter Borch & The Treaty of Münster*. The Hague: Mauritshuis; Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1998.

A close study of *The Treaty of Münster*, including biographies of individual figures, historical information, and comparative analyses.

Kiers, Judikje, and Fieke Tissing, eds. *The Golden Age of Dutch Art: Painting, Sculpture, Decorative Art*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000.

A general study of Golden Age Dutch Art containing brief examinations of two Ter Borch paintings with color plates.

MacLaren, Neil. *The Dutch School: 1600–1900*. 2 vols. London: National Gallery, 1991.

A comprehensive study of Dutch artists with a short biography of Ter Borch. It also includes catalogue entries on *A Young Woman Playing a Theorbo to Two Men*, *The Treaty of Münster*, *Portrait of a Young Woman*, and *Officer Dictating a Letter While a Trumpeter Waits*.

Nash, J. M. *The Age of Rembrandt & Vermeer: Dutch Painting in the Seventeenth Century*. Phaidon: Oxford, 1972.

Contains black and white plates of Ter Borch works and short biographies of many Dutch Golden Age artists.

Roodenburg, Herman. "The 'Hand of Friendship': Shaking Hands and Other Gestures in The Dutch Republic." In *A Cultural History of Gesture from Antiquity to the Present Day*. Edited by Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg. Cambridge, 1991, 152–89.

Includes a discussion of *The Suitor's Visit*.

Rosenberg, Jakob, Seymour Slive, and E. H. ter Kuile. *Dutch Art and Architecture: 1600–1800*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1979.

This broad survey of painting and architecture of the Dutch Golden Age contains a brief section on Ter Borch's domestic scenes, as well as a discussion of his military depictions.

Smith, David R. "Irony and Civility: Notes on the Convergence of Genre and Portraiture in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting." *The Art Bulletin* 69 (September 1987): 407–30.

An examination of symbolism, social conventions, and naturalism in Dutch Golden Age genre scenes and portraiture. The author discusses *Gallant Conversation* and *The Suitor's Visit*, along with Ter Borch's influence on the artists Frans van Mieris and Eglon Hendrick van der Neer.

Sutton, Peter C. *Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting*. Exh. cat. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1984.

Features an essay on Ter Borch, "Gerard Ter Borch: The Height of High Life," along with entries on Ter Borch's *The Grinder's Family*, *Gallant Conversation*, *Officer Writing a Letter While a Trumpeter Waits*, and *A Lady at Her Toilet*. The author discusses the historical, political, social, art historical, and economic forces surrounding Golden Age genre painting.

Sutton, Peter C., et. al. *Love Letters: Dutch Genre Paintings in the Age of Vermeer*. Exh. cat. Greenwich, CT: Bruce Museum of Arts and Science; Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 2003.

Examines the changing depictions of letter reading and writing, and allegorical associations with letters, including a section on Ter Borch's images of letter writing. The text contains a catalogue entry on Ter Borch's, *Officer Writing Dictating a Letter While a Trumpeter Waits*.

Westermann, Mariet. *Art & Home: Dutch Interiors in the Age of Rembrandt*. Zwolle, Netherlands: The Denver Art Museum, The Newark Museum and Waanders Publishers, 2001.

A comprehensive examination of decorative arts and interior design in both cultural and artistic contexts, this book contains a discussion of Samuel van Hoogstraten's *View into a Domestic Interior*, which incorporates Ter Borch's *Gallant Conversation*.

Westermann, Mariet. *A Worldly Art: The Dutch Republic 1585–1718*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.

A general survey of Golden Age Dutch painting, including a brief discussion of Ter Borch's *Woman Reading a Letter*.

Wheelock Jr., Arthur K., et. al. *A Moral Compass: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Painting in the Netherlands*. Exh. cat. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1999.

Includes an essay on public and private scenes of seventeenth-century Dutch life and how they offer moral insight into the culture of the period. There is an examination of symbolism in *A Lady at Her Toilet*.

Wheelock Jr., Arthur K. *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

A catalogue of the National Gallery of Art's collection from the period. Contains a catalogue entry on *The Suitor's Visit*.

Web Resources

www.getty.edu/art/collections/bio/a380-1.html

Brief biography of Ter Borch; catalogue entries for the Getty Museum's collection of Ter Borch works.

www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/gg51/gg51-68.0.html

Catalogue entry for the National Gallery's *The Suitor's Visit* with link to bibliography.

www.albanyinstitute.org/resources/dutch/dutch.foodways.htm

The Albany Institute of History & Art's Web site includes information on eating habits during the Dutch Golden Age.

www.metmuseum.org/toah/ht/09/euwl/ht09euwl.htm

Timeline with extensive information on key events of the Dutch Golden Age.

www.speedmuseum.org/lesson_plans.html

Web site that contains a lesson specific to Dutch still-life painting.

<http://rijksmuseum.nl/asp/framuk.asp?name=zoek>

Information on works of art by Ter Borch in the Rijksmuseum's collection.